

Press Releases

Governor Dan McKee, DEM, and RIDOT Announce \$1.4 Million in Recreational Trail Grants

PROVIDENCE – The Rhode Island Departments of Environmental Management (DEM) and Transportation (RIDOT) have awarded 22 projects a total of approximately \$1.4M in recreational trail grants to support trail development and improvement projects throughout the state. The Recreational Trails Program is funded through the Federal Highway Administration and is administered in Rhode Island by DEM and RIDOT.

"Our state's vast network of recreational trails enhances the enjoyment of Rhode Island's tremendous natural resources and provides an opportunity for people of all ages to enjoy nature and get fit by taking a walk or a hike in a peaceful, relaxing setting," said Governor Dan McKee. "It is a pleasure to award these federal grants to develop new recreational trails and hiking paths and make needed upgrades to existing facilities in communities across Rhode Island."

"These grants will enhance and upgrade existing nature trails and hiking paths and create new opportunities for public trail access sites throughout Rhode Island," said Lt. Governor Sabina Matos. "Spending time in nature is not only good for the body, but for the mind. Time spent outdoors has been proven to reduce stress and anxiety, and being able to provide that for Rhode Islanders will only go to improve our residents' quality of life."

"Rhode Island is fortunate to enjoy a strong network of active municipalities and non-profit organizations seeking to provide new and expanded opportunities for Rhode Islanders to explore the beauty of our state's natural areas and woodlands," said Department of Environmental Management Acting Director Terry Gray, PE. "DEM and DOT staff work closely with Federal Highway Administration representatives to support these many wonderful projects."

Funding through this program may be used to create new recreational trails, as well as restore and improve existing recreational trails, for both hikers and other trail users. The grants provide up to 80 percent of the cost for eligible project components that promote and enhance trail-based recreation. The grant application period opened last winter and the Trails Advisory Committee, which includes representatives of trail user groups as well as State agencies, conducted detailed analyses of each proposal.

This year, applications sought funding for more than three times the annual funding available to the State. By assessing prior projects and transferring all available funding into the current program, today's grant awards will leverage nearly \$2M investment in trails enhancements around the state.

Communities and non-profit organizations receiving grants include:

Audubon Society of RI Project: McIntosh Wildlife Refuge Trail Upgrade Grant: \$19,000 This project will upgrade the existing accessible trail at Claire McIntosh Refuge in Bristol by improving access from the parking lot, repairing areas of erosion, maintaining and improving erosion controls, removing the old gravel composite and resurfacing the trail.

Barrington Project: Harold Gibbs Woods Trail Grant: \$88,000 This project will expand public access to forested wetlands along the Palmer River through a new trail system extending into conservation parcels owned by the Town (Harold Gibbs Woods) and the local land trust. The project will include public parking and user amenities to enhance educational and passive recreational benefits to the public.

Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone Project: Manville Multimodal (Water) Trail Grant: \$28,065 In partnership with DEM, this project will reinstate the use of the Blackstone River and canal waterways loop to a navigable trail with identified portages in Cumberland by removing obstacles and improving access. In addition, a land-based green trail will be developed from the Blackstone River Bikeway access at the Albion Road crossing to a high rock outcrop overlooking the Blackstone River on the Cumberland side of the river.

DEM Parks and Recreation Project: Fort Wetherill Trail Grant: \$99,000 This project will improve the trails that traverse the rocky coastline and ruins of the historic fort from the Endicott era, and enhance connectivity and wayfinding at Fort Wetherill State Park in Jamestown. In addition, it will establish an ADA-accessible path to the park's historic fort and offer an audio tour in English and Spanish detailing the history and natural features of this unusual site.

East Providence Project: Grassy Plains Park Grant: \$72,030 This project includes a new parking lot at the Grassy Plains Park trailhead, along with a mile and a half of mixed biking and hiking trails and a half-mile long fully accessible paved trail.

East Providence Project: Trailhead Kiosks Grant: \$11,000 This project includes installation of kiosks at Willett Pond trail, Hunt's Mills trail, Turner Reservoir Loop trail, and Boyden Heights Conservation Area trailheads.

Foster Land Trust Project: Town-wide Trailhead Improvements Grant: \$81,000 This project will include parking improvements, kiosks, and signage at four trailheads, providing access to more than 12 miles of trails owned and maintained by the Foster Land Trust.

Glocester Land Trust Project: Hawkins Pond & Steere Hill Pavilions Grant: \$57,000 This project will include construction of ADA-compliant wooden pavilions with benches and picnic tables at the Hawkins Pond and Steere Hill land trust properties. The pavilion at Hawkins Pond will have a view of the shoreline and pond, and the pavilion at the summit of Steere Hill will offer wildlife habitat meadow views.

Hopkinton Land Trust Project: Beaver Flood Trail Grant: \$58,000 This project includes the development of a permanent boardwalk to facilitate crossing a wet area that is frequently flooded by beavers.

Jamestown Project: Hull Cove Grant: \$67,600 This project will provide an environmentally sensitive and handicap-accessible wooden boardwalk across the wetland area and along the existing public right-of-way to Hull Cove. The 450-foot boardwalk will include a lip for safety of wheelchairs and a viewing platform at the end.

Middletown Project: Valley Trail Expansion Grant: \$80,000 This project will expand the trail network at the Middletown Valley Park. In 2019 the Town acquired an additional 12.5 acres bringing the total park area to 45.5 acres. This project will construct 0.6 miles of trails on the newly acquired area.

Mount Hope Land Trust Project: Mount Hope Farm Grant: \$20,000 This project will rehabilitate the trails and improve handicap accessibility at Mount Hope Farm in Bristol. New signage, maps, and materials will be available for the public in two new kiosks.

Norman Bird Sanctuary Project: Universally Accessible Trail and Gray Craig Trail Grant: \$68,600 This project will improve the heavily used trails by restoring a portion of the ADA-compliant trail and the associated trailhead parking area and replacing the boardwalk over Paradise Brook on the Gray Craig Trail.

North Kingstown Project: Ryan Park Improvements Grant: \$88,000 Trail improvements at Ryan Park will include trail markers, improvements to the pedestrian crossing signage near the ballfields, bicycle racks, trailhead improvements, kiosks, vegetation maintenance and trimmings, trail resurfacing, interpretive markers, and pet waste stations. This project also includes limited clearing to incorporate a loop for the North Kingstown cross-country team.

Portsmouth Project: Trail Improvements at Melville Park Grant: \$31,696 This project will create an ADA-accessible trail connecting scenic areas of the park.

Richmond Rural Land Preservation Trust Project: Saila Preserve Grant: \$76,000 This project will include construction of an access road and parking area from Chelsea Farm Drive onto Saila Preserve.

Scituate Land Trust Project: Town-wide Trailhead Improvements Grant: \$99,533 This project will support trailhead improvements at Lawton Farm, Westconnaug Meadows, Esek Hopkins Park, and Doctors Lane. All four sites have parking facilities available, and this project will develop additional parking at the Doctors Lane site and improved signage.

Smithfield Land Trust Project: Ken Weber Trail Grant: \$33,500 This project will provide trail improvements at the Latham Brook Preserve, Wolf Hill Preserve, James Russell Preserve, and Mowry Conservation Area trails including grading and resurfacing of parking areas, kiosks, and trail marking.

The Nature Conservancy Project: Narragansett Trail Grant: \$48,000 The Nature Conservancy will work in partnership with the Hopkinton Conservation Commission and Narragansett Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club to restore about 18 miles of the Narragansett Trail, a 44-mile long hiking trail in the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed. The project also will improve

parking and signage at Narragansett trail, Canochet Preserve trail, and Hoxie Farm trail in Hopkinton.

Warwick Project: Greene Nature Trail Grant: \$85,000 This project will create safe pedestrian access directly from the Apponaug Center area to the historic General George Sears Greene Cemetery. It will include the installation of a paved pedestrian access path from Centerville Road to Kettle Street, an expanded paved accessible parking area, an accessible trail with overlooks and picnic areas, benches with companion seating, educational and wayfinding signage, fencing and bollards.

Westerly Project: White Rock Road Kayak Launch Grant: \$99,000 This project supports construction a formal access point to the Pawcatuck River for paddlers and anglers. It will include an ADA-compliant launch/path to the water, parking area improvements, and the installation of signage and two kayak racks.

Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council Project: Gotham Greens Grant: \$100,000 This project includes the development of a 1,000-foot long shared use path along the eastern bank of the Woonasquatucket River in Providence's Olneyville neighborhood, along with new benches, interpretive signs and native plantings to support local wildlife habitat.

Rhode Island's outdoor recreation industry is an increasingly important part of our state's economy, contributing an estimated \$3.3 billion annually and supporting 36,000 jobs. As part of a larger network of recreational opportunities in the state, municipal facilities play an important role in beautifying communities, supporting public health, and promoting a cleaner environment.

DEM's Green Space programs – which include Recreational Trails, Outdoor Recreation, and Local Open Space grants – fund land conservation, recreational land acquisition and development, and recreational trail development and improvements statewide. Rhode Island's historic parks, bikeways, and green spaces provide opportunity for public enjoyment – in addition to improving the health of the environment, strengthening the state's climate resilience, and supporting the economy. According to the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation in Rhode Island generates \$2.4 billion in consumer spending and supports 24,000 local jobs.

For information about DEM programs and services, visit www.dem.ri.gov. Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/RhodeIslandDEM or on Twitter (@RhodeIslandDEM) for timely updates.